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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

THE ASSOCIATED ARTISTS.



THE forming of the original firm in New York known as "The Associated Artists," it is hardly too much to say, marked an era in the history of industrial art in this country. Under this name Louis C. Tiffany and Samuel Colman, who may be classed in

the first rank of American painters, formed a business alliance with Mrs. T. M. Wheeler, then a vice-president and a moving spirit of the New York Decorative Art Society, which institution owes much of its present prosperity to the energy, good taste and judgment she devoted to its interests. The success of the new venture was what might have been expected. As an amateur in stained glass, artistic metal work and interior decoration Mr. Tiffany had already a reputation in cultivated circles; his ability and originality were conceded. Mr. Colman was no less esteemed as a connoisseur of textile fabrics and an intelligent student and collector of objects of Oriental art. Mrs. Wheeler was chiefly known through her labors on behalf of the Decorative Art Society, and had charge of the embroidery department. It soon appeared that this department might be made a profitable business in itself. Mrs. Wheeler left the concern, and, with her clever daughter, Miss Dora Wheeler, and, somewhat later, with Miss Rosina Emmet and Miss Ida F. Clark, formed a new firm, which now became the Associated Artists, Mr. Tiffany continuing his business under his own name. It is only with the work of this new firm of the Associated Artists—this unique little band of accomplished American gentlewomen—that we have to do at the present time.

Naturally enough, under the influence of such artists as Mr. Tiffany and Mr. Colman, Mrs. Wheeler's

views on art matters broadened considerably, and she soon became a very different woman from what she had been as the dilettante official of a Decorative Art Society, worshipping at the shrine—at a respectful distance—of æsthetic South Kensington. She developed in her work ideas of her own which were in open rebellion against the stern dicta that no one more severely than herself had promulgated in the name of High Art Needlework. Ask her now what she thinks of the iron-clad rule that all embroidery decoration involving the use of natural objects should

of industrial art as she had formerly done in connection with her early colleagues. The designing, manufacture and embellishment of textile fabrics, however, is the chief work to which she and her associates give their personal attention. Miss Ida F. Clark has direction of the more conventional designing done by the house, such, for instance, as is shown in the example on page 40. That Mrs. Wheeler and Miss Wheeler sometimes try their own skill in this direction will be pleasantly remembered from the fact that in Warren, Fuller & Co.'s wall-paper competition three years

ago, mother and daughter respectively carried off the first and fourth prizes, the second prize being taken by Miss Clark. The service Miss Clark performs in conventional designing Miss Wheeler and Miss Emmet render to the figure subjects. A fragment of a frieze, "Loves at Play," is given on page 40 in illustration of a class of subjects with which Miss Wheeler has already successfully identified herself. Miss Emmet's "Hilda in the Tower," on page 39, is one of a series of works in tapestry which Mrs. Wheeler intends producing with subjects taken from American history and literature. The ingenious design on this page, entitled "The Winged Moon," is one of Miss Wheeler's fancies for tapestry.

In reviewing the work of the Associated Artists it is safe to say that

they have achieved no results more important than those attained in the manufacture of stuffs. Their first work was done upon materials which Mr. Tiffany had personally collected in a foraging tour through Europe. When these were exhausted the association resolved to secure, if possible, suitable stuffs in this country. The result has been that the artistic fabrics now made here are fully equal to those produced anywhere in the world. Something has been said before in these columns of the stuff woven for tapestry, of the Gonzaga, royal in texture with its varied color effects, and of the momie silks in



"THE WINGED MOON." BY DORA WHEELER.

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A CARTOON FOR TAPESTRY.

be conventionally treated; or, better still, look at her tapestry copy of "Titian's Daughter;" or the tapestry reproduction in color of Miss Emmet's "Autumn," or the "Mermaid" yacht portière of Miss Wheeler, a fac-simile of the aquarelle model for which is given as a colored supplement to the present number.

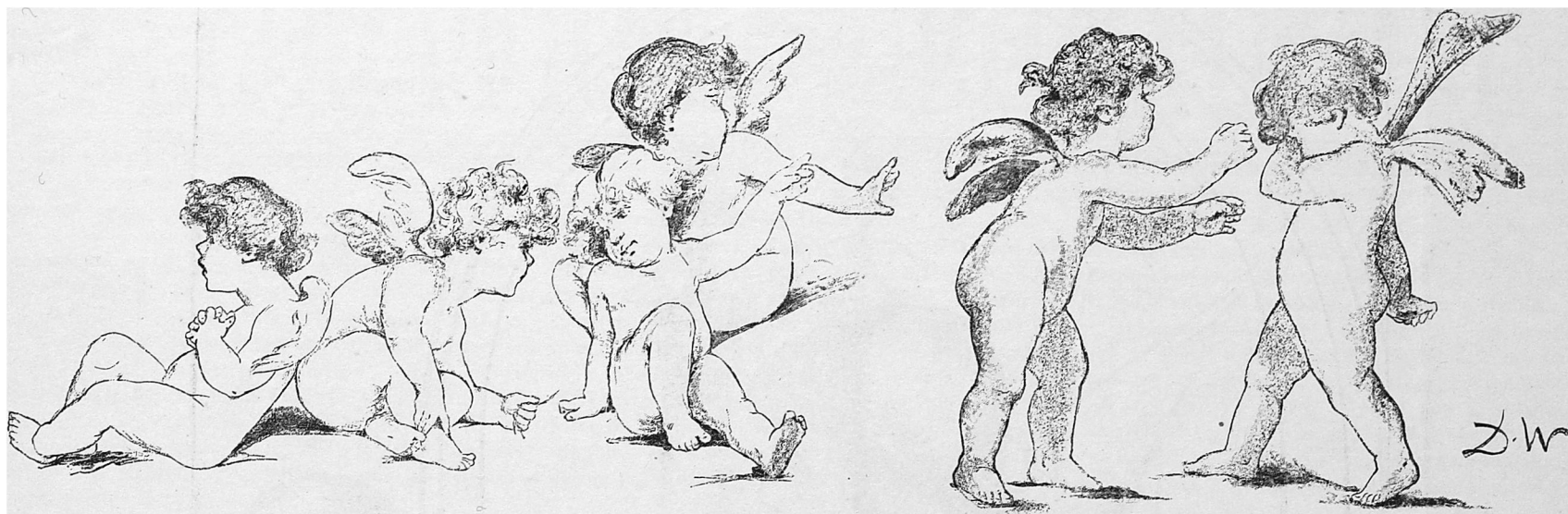
With her enlarged views as to the legitimate scope of embroidery, Mrs. Wheeler also acquired much practical knowledge in regard to interior decoration in general, and in her new business quarters we find her covering almost as much ground in the wide field





"HILDA." REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A CARTOON FOR TAPESTRY. BY ROSINA EMMET.

ONE OF A SERIES TO BE EXECUTED BY THE ASSOCIATED ARTISTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AND HISTORY.



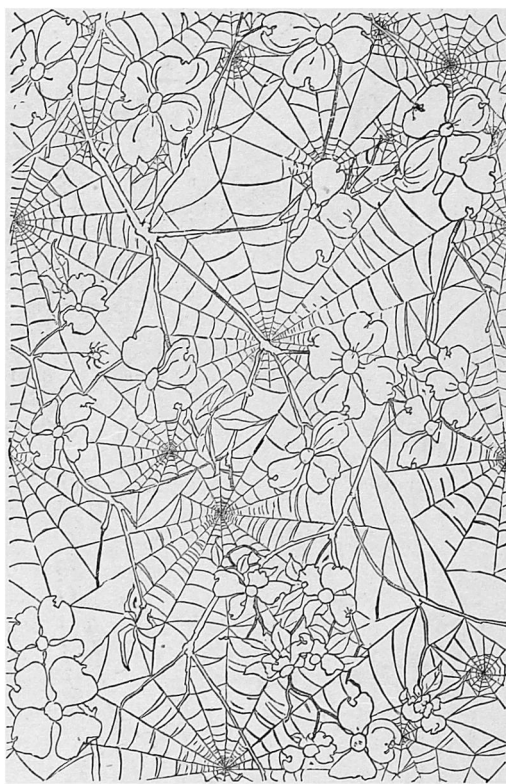
"LOVES AT PLAY." FIGURES FROM A FRIEZE DESIGN FOR TAPESTRY. BY DORA WHEELER.

which the color floats like a bloom above the surface. To these must be added the Rajah, the Beirut silks, and the last new fabric, moss stuff. The history of the last-named is the history of all, and will illustrate the good work which the Associated Artists are doing in the education of the American weaver. Moss stuff resembles the mossy carpet of the depths of the wood, greens broken through with silver and crimson, with now and then a gleam of light athwart the surface. The effect required is given in a color study. The weaver tries in vain to produce it, and at length at the end of his samples throws in the remaining threads at hap-hazard. The samples are submitted. All are failures, but in the last reckless effort lies the germ of success. He tries again, with this as a basis, and guided by instructions to bring the filling to the surface here and to bring forward the warp there; the result is a marvellous material for draperies, beautiful in both tint and texture.

In examining the designs of the new stuffs one quickly discovers that the Associated Artists have gone direct to nature, with most fortunate results. In freedom and naturalistic treatment these designs are much more akin to Japanese work than to anything European. Upon one soft, lustrous fabric, for instance, there is a design taken from the nasturtium vine, showing the peculiarities of the natural growth, and quite ignoring the recognized canons of conventional decoration, but of its artistic beauty there can scarcely be two opinions. Like treatment is applied to other floral motives, all possessing individual interest. Among the most exquisite productions are some gauze silks, delightful in color, which illustrate the decoration nature can supply, totally unassisted by art, the designs being simple reproductions of natural sprays of leaf, stem and berry, such as the photographer might have furnished. In what are termed "shadow silks," the name refers to the nature and use of the design. The ground, for example, of one of these is a thick light-green twilled fabric, showing on the reverse side a red, which also makes itself faintly felt above. The design is from the water-lily, flower and leaf, so drawn as to produce the effect of a shadow in color, a shadow such as the electric light in a park throws on the grass beneath of leaf and spray above, a shadow stirred by the wind, giving a sense of life and motion, with gradations of color instead of light and shade. Nothing that the Associated Artists have done exceeds this in novelty and beauty, or better shows how far the decorative horizon may be extended.

Ranking in importance with what has been done in the manufacture of new stuffs, is Mrs. Wheeler's development of the tapestry stitch. This stitch really depends on the tapestry fabric, a stuff so woven as to allow the stitch to pass under or over the warp, covering or making use of the filling as may be required, and thus becoming a part of the fabric itself. This process allows for the blending of tints as they are blended by the brush, and consequently it is to embroidery what painting is to canvas, without losing any of the advantages that belong to embroidery in itself. The Vanderbilt tapestries have been described in *The Art Amateur*, but the more recent

work has been carried to much greater perfection, as, for instance, in a hanging for a New York house, reproducing Miss Rosina Emmet's sketch of "Autumn." A woman, life-size, large-limbed, free in movement, stands in a wheat-field, holding on her hip a sheaf of wheat. The work is produced on tapestry stuff, the tint of which serves as the basis for the flesh tones. The modelling of the face and the details are wrought out in tints of brown and yellow, with all the subtle blending of shade into shade which distinguishes the work of the brush. Several attempts have been made to reproduce that well-known work, "Titian's Daughter," and the final rendering is a signal evidence of how completely textures can be simulated in this way, the stiff, lustrous brocade, the gleaming berries, the ripe, rosy fruit held aloft in the



REPEATING EMBROIDERY DESIGN. BY IDA F. CLARK.

golden dish being all reproduced with wonderful exactness. Technically there is more unusual imitation of painters' work in a little "Love Gathering Daisies." The softly rounded curves of the child are delightfully given; the foreground is brought out in well chosen details, while the background melts away in the uncertain green haze of early spring foliage. The effect is that of broad washes of water-color, and it is a water-color in fact rather than needlework, that the piece resembles.

Besides technical effects, this tapestry also translates artistic moods. In a small piece intended for a screen, called "Twilight," personated by a woman with trailing sombre draperies, walking with bowed head under a sky which the sun has left, it is the sentiment one feels, unmindful of the medium. These

examples will show the importance this new tapestry is destined to attain. There seems to be no reason to doubt its capacity to translate the methods and moods of modern art as effectively as did the tapestry of the past the art of Boucher and Watteau.

THE interest some of our best-trained figure painters take in decorative work is not generally known. Some are studying the matter seriously, and happily are not without encouragement, through the enterprise of one or two well-known firms, whose business it is to furnish interior decoration of a high order. Francis Lathrop, Walter Shirlaw, C. H. Blashfield, Frank Fowler, and T. W. Dewing have already executed important commissions from various persons of means, who begin to see that it is not always necessary to employ such French artists as Emile Lévy, Galland, Lefebvre and Foubert to enrich their ceilings and provide their mural decoration. These foreign painters labor under the disadvantage of not being able to see the rooms they are to treat pictorially, and, naturally, they not infrequently commit the error of painting in too heavy or too delicate a manner, so that the work after it is placed, in many cases, disparages the size or proportions of the apartment for which it was designed.

A NEW YORK drawing-room contains hangings of white velours with an all-over Venetian design couched in old gold; above there are two Cupids pelting one another with roses done in solid embroidery on gold cloth. A table-cover of crimson velours is much simpler in design. Large flowers and their leaves are cut out of one of those cretonnes not so much remarkable for the texture as for these superb designs. In this case the flowers are great, luscious, open blossoms overwrought in silk, following the shading, as indicated by the flower and repeating the tints.

A NOTABLE piece of needlework is a bed-cover of white linen worked with blue. The design is in two parts, each a series of floral scrolls. That in the centre is brought out by the ground wrought in bars between the ornament about three quarters of an inch apart. The border is distinguished by having the groundwork crossed in small diamonds. This is all done in outline-stitch, and its execution is merely a question of time.

OLD-FASHIONED écru canvas has come again into use. It is very flexible and is used without any ground filling. Borders are made of drawn work, and the designs are wrought in old-fashioned cross-stitch. A beautiful table-cover is worked in this way with groups of pansies and their foliage.

THE plaster-cast makers now have for sale a very complete assortment of animal heads, from moulds taken from the best French bronzes. The familiar brute creation, from the dog, the horse, and the cow down to the pig, and the forest world in such instances as several species of deer, the chamois, wild boar, lion, tiger, wolf, bear, and so on are admirably represented.



The casts are small, and very spirited and accurate, affording pleasing decorations for a working room and excellent models for study. Copies of some of the finest old Italian low reliefs and busts are also beginning to appear, and are well worth the trifling sums asked for them. They are best left white, if to be used to draw from; but for decoration they should be ivoryized by immersion in a solution of paraffine in turpentine of the consistency of thin oil, or damar varnish. They can be painted with the solution, but immersion secures a more equal color, as the plaster absorbs the compound with greater evenness.

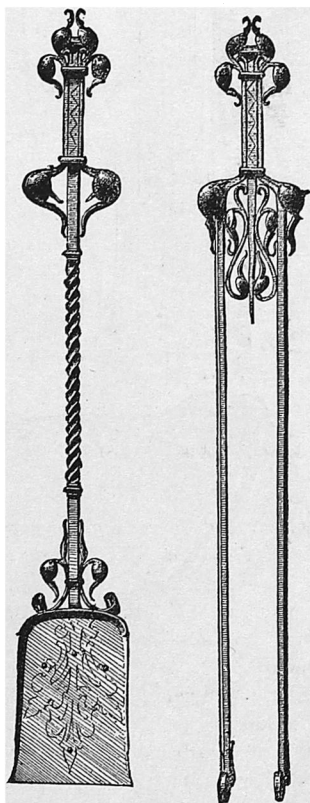
#### PERSIAN RUGS AND CARPETS.

S. G. W. BENJAMIN, the well-known art critic, who is now United States Consul-General at Teheran, has sent to the State Department a long and interesting report on the famous carpets of Persia. He says there are four leading classes of these carpets—the large-sized, the rugs, the ghileem or knitted goods, and the namáds or felt carpets. Carpets produced in Irak are called pharaghans, and are firmer than other Persian carpets. Large-sized carpets must be made to order. "Besides the pharaghan carpets (says Mr. Benjamin) floors are also carpeted sometimes with fabrics from Kerwanshab, Hawadan, and the district of Lauristan. Also for this purpose the carpets of Mech-Kabad, in Khorassen, are available, although of inferior texture to the pharaghan. The carpets of Kerwan have the texture fitted to the rough usage required in covering floors; but while perhaps of superior quality to the pharaghan, they are always small and proportionately more expensive.

"The Persian carpet par excellence is the rug. The Persians use these in preference to large sizes. First covering the earth floor with a hasseer or matting of split reeds, they lay over it many rugs, which completely conceal the mat. This arrangement, when

two rugs are altogether identical. But in other classes, such as the rugs of Kerwan, Dyochehan, or Kurdistan, there is endless variety in design and texture.

"A point to be considered is that while the small carpets of Persia go under the general designation of



MODERN FRENCH FIRE-IRONS.

rugs, it would be a serious mistake to consider them all as merely carpets of small size intended to be trod on by heavy shoes. In the first place Persians, when at home, take off their shoes, and thus a carpet of fine, delicate woof and design will last for ages, and actually improve with use such as this. In the second place, a large proportion of the rugs of Persia, and especially the finer grades, are never intended to be laid on the floor, but to cover divans or tables, or to hang as tapestries and portières.

"This explains the extreme fineness of texture and velvety surface which many of these rugs display, and also accounts for the fringe at the ends. Some of the rugs of Kerwan are almost as fine as cashmere shawls. The designs of these rugs were formerly of a large pattern, with a general ground of red, white, or some other uniform tint with borders and details of minute tracery harmonizing with rather than disturbing the general effect. These patterns are unquestionably of higher artistic importance, exhibiting a quality designated by artists as breadth.

"At present, while there is apparently no difference in texture, there is an evident tendency toward smaller designs, which lose much of the effect unless seen with close inspection. Perhaps this is only the result of a reaction from long-established custom, and it must be conceded that the modern designs of Persian rugs are more popular with the average European and American buyer.

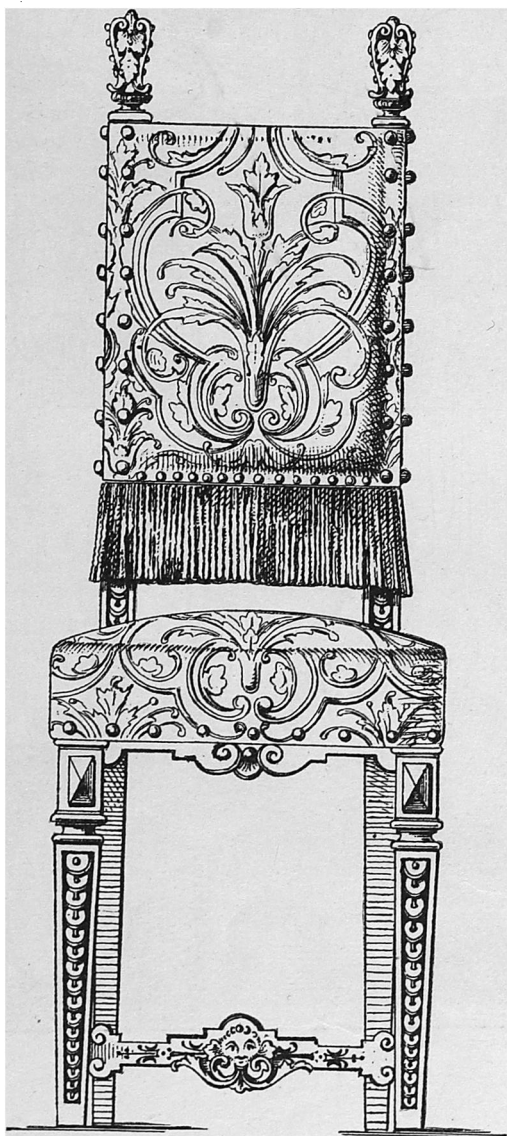
"The colors formerly employed in the rugs of Persia were imperishable. Rugs one hundred years old show no deterioration in tint, but rather a softness such as old paintings assume. The introduction of aniline dyes at one time threatened to ruin the manufacture of textile fabrics in Persia, but the law against the employment of aniline dyes enacted by the Persian Government is enforced with rigor.

"The namáds or felt carpets of Persia, although produced by a process which perhaps excludes them from the list of strictly textile fabrics, may yet properly be considered in this report. The namád is made by forming a frame of the thickness intended or excavating a place in the ground floor of the size and depth equivalent to the namád intended. The hair is laid in this and beaten with mallets until the original disjointed mass has obtained cohesion and is reduced to the dimensions of the frame. A design of colored threads is beaten into the upper surface, sometimes quite effective. The namád, however, is desirable less for its beauty than the complete sense of comfort which it affords. It is much thicker than other car-

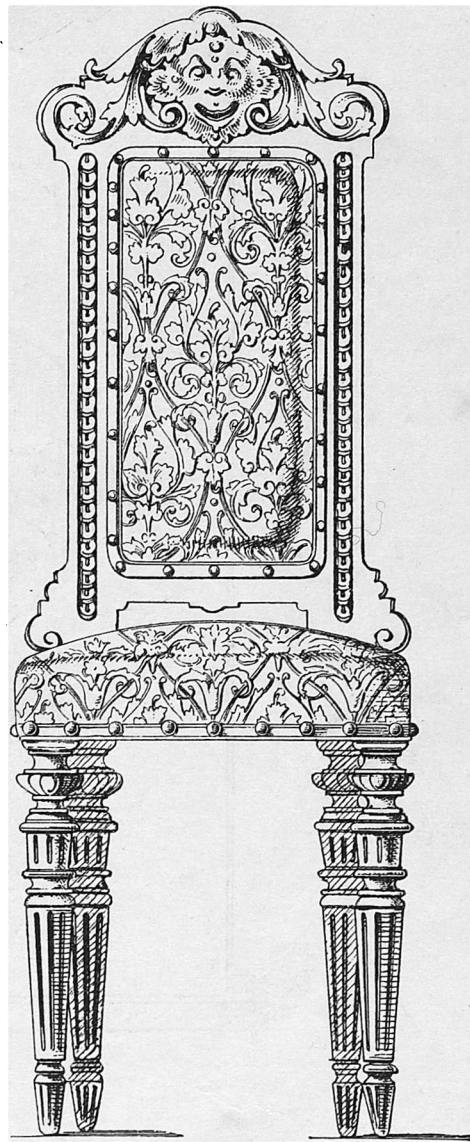
pets, and the sensation to the tread is luxurious. No carpet has ever been manufactured that is more suitable for the comfort of a sleeping room in winter. Of course there is a difference in the quality of these namáds, but the dearest are far cheaper than the same surface of carpets or rugs woven in the usual styles. The great weight and clumsiness of the namáds must unfortunately prevent their exportation to any extent until the means of transport are improved. The best quality of namád is made at Isfahán, but the most massive are produced at Yezd. One would imagine that the size of the namád must necessarily be limited. But, on the contrary, the regular Persian carpets rarely equal and never exceed the dimensions of some namáds. The namád is more often than the carpets intended to cover an entire floor, elegant rugs being laid over it in places. I have seen a namád seventy-five feet long by nearly forty wide in one piece.

"There is one species of rug special to Persia often spoken of, but rarely seen. I refer to the rugs made of silk. It is not uncommon to see rugs of the finer types with silken fringes, and sometimes with a woof of silk in the body of the rug. But all-silk rugs are rare, and rarer now than formerly. They are generally small, and intended for luxury rather than use. The price is necessarily very high. The chief of the merchants of Teheran told me of one he had seen over a tomb; it was barely two square yards in size; but he said that two hundred tomans, or \$360, would be a low price for it."

To the artistic mind, the growing use of wrought iron for decorative purposes is one of the cheering signs of the times. There is no better example of this than in the American Art Galleries, where the metal work is one of the features of the architect's success. The approach to the entrance,



MODERN GERMAN DINING-ROOM CHAIR.



MODERN GERMAN HALL CHAIR.

composed of rugs of harmonious designs, is very rich, while the cost is actually less than if one large carpet were employed instead. The varieties of Persian rugs are numerous. In some sorts, like the Turkowan, there is a general similarity of design, although no

between iron fences of graceful design but strong construction, is especially novel and picturesque. The ornamentation of the gas fixtures in the galleries is another proof of how very little it takes to beautify a commonplace object, if one has the necessary taste.